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LETTERS

ON THE

EXISTENCE AND CHARACTER

OF THE

DEITY,

AND ON THE

MORAL STATE

OF

MAN.

PHILADELPHIA:

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PREFACE.

THE following letters were written at the requeſt of a young friend, and were occaſioned by ſome converſations on theſe intereſting ſubjects: on ſuch ſubjects new diſcoveries cannot be expected: moſt of the thoughts are ſuch as the author had met with in the courſe of reading or converſation, ſome few may have been the reſult of his own reflections: he did not think it needful, and in moſt caſes it was not in his power to refer to the authors from whom he had gleaned: he arranged

theſe

theſe thoughts according to his own judgment, and the whole are only ſketches or outlines not filled up. They were deſigned as materials or hints for thinking, and are publiſhed with an earneſt deſire of drawing the attention of young perſons to the ſtudy of thoſe ſubjects which are univerſally important. It is not expected that theſe few pages will reform the world, but if they ſhould catch the attention of a few, and be the means of leading them to inquire and judge for themſelves, they will not have been publiſhed in vain.

PHILADELPHIA,
Feb. 1799.

LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

I NOW ſend you ſome thoughts on the hints which occurred in our late converſation, relating to the arguments of modern philoſophers, who, while they admit the exiſtence of a Deity, diſcard revelation, and endeavour to deduce the principles of moral rectitude from

from the operations of reaſon, unaſſiſted by the ſacred records.

Doctor Wilſon, in a work which he publiſhed about the middle of the eighteenth century, remarked, that, If all the philoſophers and advocates for the ſufficiency of natural religion who ever exiſted were aſſembled in one ſynod, their united wiſdom could never have diſcovered this ſimple propoſition: Gen. i. 1. *In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.*—And the philoſophers and philoſophical divines ſet to work to overthrow his aſſertion, but they were not able to do it to their own ſatisfaction.

Indeed

Indeed the reaſon of their failing need not be wondered at. We have not many channels of acquiring knowledge: they may be all reduced to theſe three, Obſervation, Reaſoning, and Teſtimony. It will be difficult to find any other ſources of information.

Our ſenſes bring us notices of many things, and the more our obſervations are extended, the greater number of objects fall under our obſervation; but we need not be told that all theſe, however extended, muſt neceſſarily be *ſenſible objects*, and can never furniſh us with any primary evidences of the exiſtence of a Deity.

We

We can reaſon, and the things which come under our ſenſible obſervations furniſh ſubjects for analogy, and in this the powers of the human mind are very extenſive. We can compare and judge of the agreement and diſagreement, not of things only but alſo of ideas, both ſimple and compound, in their various relations; and theſe reaſonings and the concluſions drawn from them are of very great importance in the affairs of man and ſociety, but do they lead us a ſtep nearer to the diſcovery of a Deity? All our reaſonings about ſenſible objects and their qualities muſt neceſſarily terminate in ſenſible objects and their qualities, for the ſtream can never

never rise higher than the fountain whence it flowed, and it is impossible that our ideas of these things can ever carry the mind above things of the like nature.

I know it has often been urged, that the consideration of ourselves and all around us, must lead us to think that there must be a powerful and intelligent being who made and directs all things. For instance, when we see a piece of mechanism we must infer that it was the work of a mechanic, and when we see a house we naturally conclude that somebody built it. True, we very justly conclude so, because we previously know that mechanics make

pieces of mechaniſm, and that men build houſes: theſe are things which have been done, and when we ſee them we very naturally infer that ſuch perſons muſt have made them; but do we know of any perſon making a rock, a hill, a river, or a tree? Have we been accuſtomed to ſee worlds made, that when we ſee them we neceſſarily infer their maker? Here the caſe is widely different, we have neither experience nor obſervation here to direct our concluſion. Theſe things have been as they are, as far back as we can recollect, our parents or anceſtors, as far back as can be traced, have never ſeen ſuch things made.

The

The moſt natural concluſion, therefore, perhaps the only one which we could draw from ſuch premiſes, would be, that theſe things never had a beginning, but had always been as we now perceive them, allowing for ſuch occaſional variations as we may obſerve in our own day; that ſeas, rivers, earth, mountains, rocks, &c. had always exiſted; that animals and vegetables had ſprung from their parents, as we know they do now; that as the change and ſucceſſion of ſeaſons and the general order of the univerſe, as far as we can perceive, are pretty uniform, they have always been ſo, and we cannot find any reaſon to ſuppoſe

that

that they ever began to be as they are now. The appearances and order of the univerſe may be matters of curioſity and of aſtoniſhment, but we are poſſeſſed of no data to furniſh any hints for ſolving the phenomena, and conſequently nothing to give riſe even to a conjecture of a firſt cauſe producing and directing the courſe of the univerſe.

Do not theſe things then contain any evidence of the exiſtence and government of a Supreme Being? Yes, verily, they contain and exhibit ſublime leſſons, but how ſhall we benefit by them without revelation? Put the works of Sir Iſaac Newton into the

hands

hands of a man who cannot read, of what uſe are they to him? But let him be taught to read and inſtructed in the nature and deſign of theſe works, and he may come to underſtand the greateſt diſcoveries of that great philoſopher. So let a man learn from revelation, either traditional or written, the exiſtence, character, or conduct of God, and all the works of nature will ſpeak to him a very intelligible language. To him "The heavens will declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſhew forth his handy work,"

"For ever ſinging as they ſhine,
The hand that made us is Divine."

There

There is another ſource of information—Teſtimony.—But the teſtimony of other men, who have only the ſame means of acquiring knowledge which we ourſelves poſſeſs, though it may differ in degree muſt of neceſſity be the ſame in kind with our own obſervations or reaſonings, and for the reaſons already aſſigned can never lead us a ſtep nearer to the diſcovery of a firſt cauſe.

But it is ſaid, that the moſt ſavage nations which have yet been diſcovered, have always had among them ſome ideas of a God or Gods, and ſome notions of religious worſhip, however abſurd theſe may be, which ſhews that mankind poſſeſs the knowledge of a

Deity

Deity without having ever heard of revelation.

The premiſes are true, but the concluſion does not ſeem fairly drawn, but quite the reverſe. It would rather appear that they had heard of revelation, and that the knowledge and religion which they poſſeſs, however corrupted in their progreſs, muſt have originally flowed from that ſource, and that it muſt have been a very general cauſe which has produced an effect ſo very extenſive as to ſhew itſelf in all nations.—By the by, this circumſtance ſeems to ſhew that it was probably not the reſult of deep philoſophical reſearch among theſe nations.

It

It ſhews likewiſe that at ſome time revelation was known to all mankind, and that in their various migrations this knowledge accompanied them, though corrupted by various people in various ways, and therefore traces of it are to be found in all nations in one form or another. Thus it appears, that the knowledge of a Deity, without the intervention of revelation, muſt always have remained totally undiſcoverable by man.

Not only the knowledge of a Deity muſt have been unattainable without revelation, but what muſt have been the ſituation of man with reſpect to principles of moral rectitude? It has been

been ſaid that moral principles ariſe from the fitneſs of things. What is this fitneſs of things? or how came we by the knowledge of it? By revelation only: and it may ſafely be aſſerted that no good moral principles have ever been eſtabliſhed, but what have been drawn from this ſource.

Even thoſe who diſcard revelation, have in part availed themſelves of it in the formation of their ſyſtems of morality; but how vague and uncertain are they! without a ſolid foundation, without energy, without ſanction, except the hopes or fears of preſent good or evil; and how inſufficient to

check the conduct, in circumſtances where detection is not feared!

But what human wiſdom could never have reached, revelation unfolds with the utmoſt eaſe and ſimplicity.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. This ſhort propoſition ſhews us at once the exiſtence, the power, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of God; and in the amplification of his character in the ſacred ſcriptures, Creation is ſpoken of as exhibiting his almighty power, with ſuch ſublimity as ſhines, even under all the diſadvantages of a tranſlation, with unrivalled ſplendor. Gen. i. 3. *God ſaid, Let there be light, and there was light.* Iſaiah

iah xlv. 7. *I form the light and create darkneſs.* Verſe 12. *I have made the earth, and created man upon it, I, even my hands have ſtretched out the heavens, and all their hoſt have I commanded.* Ch. xliv. 24. *I am the Lord that maketh all things, that ſtretcheth forth the heavens alone, that ſpreadeth abroad the earth by myſelf.* Ch. xlviii. 13. *Mine hand alſo hath laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand hath ſpanned the heavens.* Ch. xlii. 5. *Thus ſaith God the Lord, he that created the heavens and ſtretched them out, he that ſpread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it: he that giveth breath*

to

to the people upon it, and ſpirit to them that walk therein.

His infinite wiſdom and goodneſs are ſet forth with equal dignity and ſublimity in the ſacred records.—His moral character is unfolded with great ſimplicity in the 34th chapter of Exodus, verſes 6 and 7th. *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering and abundant in goodneſs and truth. Keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity and tranſgreſſion and ſin, and that in clearing will not clear the guilty. Viſiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and to the fourth generation* (chap. xx. 5, 6.) *of them that hate me, and ſhewing mercy unto*

unto thouſands (of generations) *of them that love me and keep my commandments.*

Thus we ſee the exiſtence of God is clearly exhibited in the ſcripture, and his character manifeſted with ſuch ſimplicity and perſpicuity, that every perſon, even of the meaneſt capacity, is fully competent to the knowledge of it; and the ſimple reader of the word of God acquires with the utmoſt eaſe, a better grounded, and more unequivocal knowledge of the exiſtence and character of the True God, than all the boaſted diſcoveries of deiſtical philoſophers have ever pretended to.

In the ſcriptures we find the pureſt principles of morality flowing from a ſource

ſource fully adequate to the production of ſuch principles,—the will of God, and that expreſſed, not with the ambiguity of heathen oracles, or the farfetched, often uncertain concluſions of philoſophical deduction, but with the utmoſt preciſion and diſtinctneſs, that he who runs may read, and ſanctioned not only with the hopes and fears of preſent good or evil, but with the certainty of future rewards and puniſhments, flowing from a tribunal where miſtakes, deceptions, and injuſtice are abſolutely impoſſible. Where it is impoſſible that the good ſhould miſs the reward of their goodneſs, and equally impoſſible for the wicked to eſcape the juſt puniſhment of their wickedneſs.

LETTER

LETTER II.

AS I am perſuaded that revelation is the ſource of all the moſt valuable knowledge we poſſeſs, and that it furniſhes the only data for ſolving the phenomena in the moral world, let us try what accounts we can find of the diſſemination of revelation among mankind.

When we read the three firſt chapters of Geneſis, we learn, not only that God created the heavens and the earth,

but

but that he alſo created all their inhabitants: and when the earth was covered with vegetables and peopled with animals, and the ſeas and waters ſtored with fiſhes, and the air with winged inhabitants; as the laſt and moſt dignified of his works, God formed man of the duſt of the ground, and breathed into his noſtrils the breath of life, and man became a living ſoul: that he created them male and female, bleſſed them, and gave them dominion over the earth, and all its productions and inhabitants.

In this ſtate man was familiar with revelation. God talked with him, and gave him a law for the regulation of his

his conduct, and connected with the breach of it the punishment of death. What would have been the situation of the human race if Adam had continued in his obedience, may be conjectured, but not distinctly ascertained.

He did not continue, however, to keep the law which was given to him, and the threatened penalty, *Dying, thou shalt die*, came into operation. Death began its operation, and continued it until he returned to the dust from whence he was taken. His disobedience placed him in a situation very different from that in which he was created, but did not deprive him of revelation, of which he now stood in

more need than in his former ſtate; and accordingly we find that immediately ſubſequent to his fall, revelation was renewed to him with ſome peculiarities.

The diſcipline under which he was now to be placed was ſhewn to him: it was announced to him that the ſeed of the woman was to overcome the ſerpent. Sacrifice alſo ſeems to have been inſtituted and explained, and hence Abel offered a ſacrifice in faith; and from the circumſtance of Cain and Abel both offering their *firſt-fruits*, we may conclude that many things were revealed, and many inſtitutions eſtabliſhed, which were afterwards incorporated

porated in the laws and ordinances recorded by Moſes. We find alſo in the inſtructions given to Noah, that the diſtinction between clean and unclean beaſts had been eſtabliſhed, for it is mentioned to him as a thing well known.

That the knowledge of the true God was preſerved, and its influence underſtood, we learn from various circumſtances between the creation and the flood of Noah: thus Enoch is ſaid to have *walked with God*. No explanation is given; hence it would ſeem that none was needed, there was no difficulty in underſtanding what *walking with God* meant. The reaſon why the

the flood was ſent to deſtroy man from the face of the earth, was, *becauſe the wickedneſs of man was great.—All fleſh had corrupted his way.* Men being wicked and corrupting their ways, neceſſarily implies the knowledge of a law for directing their conduct; becauſe it is diſobedience to a known law which conſtitutes wickedneſs or corruption. The depravity of mankind was become ſo very general, that Noah only was found righteous before God in that generation. He was a preacher of righteouſneſs; and God's ſpeaking to him is ſpoken of in ſuch a way, as intimates that ſuch communications had not

not been uncommon, and therefore not ſurpriſing.

The ſame hiſtory informs us, that according to the threatening, the flood came, and ſwept away the whole human race, excepting only Noah and his family. He, by the direction of God, had prepared an ark, wherein his family and pairs of all the animal creation were preſerved, and by them the earth was repeopled after the flood.

Noah, after the deſcent of his family from the ark, offered a ſacrifice to the Lord of all clean animals, (an extra number of which had been preſerved with him) hence we learn, that the knowledge and practice of ſacrifice,

and

and all its relatives, was preſerved, and prepared for being diſſeminated among all the poſterity of Noah: and that the true import thereof was underſtood and properly attended to, appears from God having accepted the ſacrifice.

It has been urged that there was no writing in thoſe days, and therefore revelation muſt have been very imperfectly known.—Admitting that there was no writing, (which is by no means certain) this remark is very eaſily obviated by obſerving the great longevity of the people of thoſe times.

Adam lived for many centuries after his poſterity were multiplied on the earth, being above nine hundred years old

old when he died, by which time Methuſelah had opportunity to converſe with him for above two hundred years, and Noah had opportunity for above two hundred years to converſe with Methuſelah, which afforded ample time for Noah to acquire a complete knowledge of all that had been revealed from the creation till the flood: his children alſo at that time had enjoyed the converſation of the antediluvians for about one hundred years, and Noah himſelf lived with them three hundred years after the flood, which gave him ſufficient time to inſtruct his poſterity thoroughly in the knowledge of the character and will of God.

Noah

Noah lived till the days of Abraham, and Shem lived till Iſaac was well advanced in years—indeed Jacob was forty-eight years of age when Shem died. So that theſe living chronicles might well convey the traditions of revelation to their poſterity, who for ſo many centuries had opportunity of learning from their mouths, the great works and words of God which they had witneſſed.

For ſome time after the flood, mankind ſeem to have lived in the ſame country, for perhaps a whole century, to the days of Peleg, in whoſe days the earth is ſaid to have been divided. Gen. x. 25. About this time it ſeems likely

likely the ſcheme of building a city and a tower or temple to the heavens, was formed, and they ſet to work with it in the land of Shinar, when God confounded their language, that they ſhould not underſtand one another's ſpeech.

Hutchinſon remarks, from the formation of the Hebrew words, that the confuſion which took place and cauſed their diſperſion, was not a difference of language; but as they had by this time departed from the ſimple worſhip of the true God, to worſhip the heavens, their tower was intended to be dedicated, as a general temple, to the worſhip of the heavens. The confu-

ſion was, ſuch a diſagreement about the objects and manner of worſhip, that they ſeparated from one another, as has often happened ſince; and as they divided the earth among them, they carried with them the knowledge of the true God, mixed with the various corruptions and innovations which they had ſo early introduced. Thus, while the traditions of the knowledge and worſhip of the true God were ſpread over the world, corruptions and innovations were gradually introduced, till they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into images made like to corruptible things: and becauſe they did not like to retain God in their know-

knowledge, he gave them up to the luſts of their own hearts. See Rom. i. 21, to end. And hence came the vile, degraded and corrupted ſtate of the traditions of revelation, which have gradually ſunk and degraded nations to the ſavage ſtate, in which many of them now are, and from which others are but lately and in part emerged.

But this was a work of time, and progreſſive evil. In the early ages the knowledge of God, and even communications from him, were not uncommon, even in thoſe nations who had already in part obſcured the light of divine revelation: as in Egypt, Gen. xi. 17, 18, 19. in Sodom, Gen. xiv. 22.

22. in Gerar, Gen. xx. 3—7 and 26, 28. in Syria, Gen. xxxi. 24. Many other inſtances might be brought, that the knowledge of the character and laws of the true God were not obliterated at once; but in a ſucceſſion of ages became ſo obſcure, as to be no longer diſtinctly diſcernible; and that not till after the Moſt High had ſeparated the ſeed of Jacob for himſelf, and ſet up his tabernacle among them, to be a light to the ſurrounding nations.

From this view it will be eaſy to perceive, that whatever has been found good and true in religion and morals, among the nations of the earth who have

have not the knowledge of the written word among them, are ſhining fragments of that glorious light, which ſhone in its primitive ſplendor among their more remote anceſtors.

When we conſider the character of God, as delineated in the ſacred oracles, and the manner in which his attributes are exemplified, unfolding by degrees, new and amiable, and intereſting views of his perfections, are we not ready to conclude, that Goodneſs is, if we may ſo expreſs it, the leading characteriſtic? and when we view him as a *Creator*, who has made proviſion for, and given life to ſo many millions of creatures of various claſſes,

does

does it not forcibly ſtrike us, that his goodneſs is manifeſted in communicating happineſs to all the works of his hands?

The irrational animals are directed to their proper good by inſtinct, which ſeldom or never miſleads them: this is the law of their nature, and they are generally obſervant of it. To man, the chief of his works in this world, he has alſo given rules for his conduct, reaſon to enable him to judge, and leſt he ſhould ſtill err, the precepts and injunctions are illuſtrated by examples: the principles and hopes exhibited in the ſacred records, are adapted for his guidance by infinite wiſdom and infinite goodneſs.

LETTER

LETTER III.

THE neceſſity of revelation need not be proved, it being impoſſible that man could acquire the knowledge of the exiſtence and character of God, or diſcover proper principles of moral rectitude without it. It is equally needleſs to prove that revelation has been given; the ideas of the exiſtence, and the worſhip of a Deity, and the knowledge of moral good and evil, unattain-

unattainable without it, being to be found in ſome degree in all nations.

Various collections of writings have claimed the honour of being the revelation of God. The compariſon has been made, and after the ſtricteſt examination, the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtaments ſtand unrivalled in their claim to that character.

The truth and authenticity of the Old Teſtament has evidences, ſuch as appear amply ſufficient to ſatisfy the moſt ſcrupulous inquirer.

The law was given from mount Sinai, in the ſight and hearing of the whole people of Iſrael without exception. They had been all witneſſes of the

the mighty works whereby God had brought them out of Egypt. They had all ſeen the ſea divided, and every one had paſſed through the ſea on dry ground, while the waters ſtood up as a wall on each ſide. They had witneſſed the deſtruction of the Egyptians, by the ſea returning to his channel. They had been conducted in the day by a pillar of cloud, and by night the ſplendor of a pillar of fire had directed their movements: and now, when the whole nation was aſſembled, in expectation of a public diſplay of the Divine preſence, they ſaw the awful manifeſtation; and all the individuals in the whole nation were made to hear the words of God,

proclaiming in the moſt unequivocal language, his exiſtence, the relation in which he ſtood to them, and that glorious law which they ought to keep.

Here was no ambiguity, the words were explicit, and not only all heard, but every individual underſtood them; and that all diſpute of what the law was, might be precluded, it was written by God himſelf on two tables of ſtone, and the cuſtody of it publicly committed to a whole tribe, in the preſence of all the people. And that the knowledge of it might continue univerſal among them, and the practice of the precepts conſtant, every man was commanded, not only to have a copy

copy of the whole law, but to write it alſo on the moſt public places, on the poſts of his houſe and on his gates, that it might become the ſubject of inquiry to their children, and that every man might be qualified to explain the reaſons of the inſtitutions to ſucceeding generations.

Their being conducted through the wilderneſs, and placed in the land which God had promiſed, was ſuch a proof of the Divine veracity as left no room for doubt to enter. The declarations of God, that he would bleſs them if they kept his laws, and would puniſh them if they were diſobedient, have been moſt accurately accompliſhed, as

is

is corroborated by the hiſtory of other nations: and their diſperſion at this day, according to the predictions in the ſcripture, is ſuch a living witneſs to the truth of theſe ſcriptures, as never was exhibited by any other nation. So accurately indeed have the predictions of the prophets been verified, that thoſe who diſputed the Divine authority of the ſcriptures, finding no other way to evade the force of their evidence, have contended, that the books were written after the events took place; but this allegation was rendered null, by the knowledge, that before ſeveral of theſe events took place, the ſacred books were tranſlated

into

into Greek, and copies multiplied in many parts of the world.

That a man, or a few men, may be themſelves deceived, or that they may impoſe upon others, may be true; but in this caſe a whole nation are the witneſſes, and in caſes where the teſtimony confeſſedly militates againſt their own characters; and their very exiſtence in their preſent ſtate confirms it, and the whole exhibits ſuch a weight of evidence, as ſeems to ſet at defiance even incredulity itſelf.

So very careful were the Jews of their ſacred books, that it is ſaid they counted not only the books and diviſions, but even the letters themſelves,

and

and carefully noted down not only their relative poſitions, but even their numerical order in the ſhorter diviſions, that they might guard againſt the ſmalleſt alteration.

This, it will be ſaid, was a ſuperſtitious veneration for the letter of their ſacred books, while they neglected the ſpirit of them.—Be it ſo.—It has, however, proved one of the means which have brought down the Hebrew Text of the Old Teſtament to our times, in ſuch purity, that in the collation of many hundreds of the moſt ancient MS copies which could be found, there is not obſerved a variation which alters the ſignification of a law,

law, a prophecy, or a doctrine; and when compared with the Septuagint tranſlation, which was made above two thouſand years ago, that is, before the coming of Chriſt, there is a wonderful harmony and coincidence between them. So that we may ſafely rely on the integrity of the parts, as well as upon the evidence of the whole.

The authority of the Old Teſtament being eſtabliſhed, forms a baſis for that of the New. The firſt promiſe of victory to be obtained by the ſeed of the woman, was gradually amplified in the Old Teſtament, and thus formed a foundation for the faith of the ancients, who, underſtanding the import

of

of the ſymbolical inſtitutions, looked forward to the promiſed Deliverer. God promiſed to Abraham, that in his ſeed all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed, when his wife had been barren till her ninetieth year, and paſt all hopes of being a mother. The promiſe ran in the line of Iſaac, and of Iſaac's ſons Jacob had the promiſe: and among the twelve ſons of Jacob, it was foretold that the Meſſiah ſhould be a deſcendant of Judah, in whom (as the name imports) the praiſe of Jehovah ſhould be manifeſted. And the laſt predictions of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 8—12. and of Moſes, Deut. xxxiii. 7. had evident reference to this.

After

After David was called to be king, the promiſe was renewed to him; to which he refers, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1—5. In ſubſequent times, the prophets frequently ſpoke of the coming of the Glorious Holy One, particularly the ſeraphic Iſaiah, vide ch. iv. and chapters xi. and xii. ch. xxxii. alſo ch. xxxv. ch. xl. ch. xlii. ch. xlix. ch. lii. ch. liii. and indeed the greater part of the whole book: and all the prophets, as many as have ſpoken, have likewiſe foretold concerning him. In the prophecy of Daniel, the particular time is ſpecified when the Meſſiah ſhould come, being four hundred and ninety years after the going forth of the com-

mandment to reſtore and build Jeruſalem, which was at that time deſolate, but the ſeventy years of her captivity were near a cloſe.

The coming of John the Baptiſt, as the voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, was likewiſe foretold, Iſaiah xl. 3. and in Malachi 3 and 1. and in both inſtances connected with the coming of the Meſſiah.

That there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus Chriſt, is acknowledged by deiſts, Jews and Mahometans, and that he came at the time which the Chriſtian Scriptures declare. The Koran acknowledges, that he was a prophet

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ſent by God: the Jews and deiſts deny it.

That he was the promiſed Meſſiah, appears by the predictions of the prophets being verified in him. He came at the appointed time, when the general expectations of the people were ſo raiſed, that when John appeared it was a queſtion, whether he were the Chriſt or not.

In him were fulfilled the prophecies: Iſaiah vii. 14. compared with Matth. i. 22, 23. *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken of the Lord by the prophet, ſaying, Behold, a virgin ſhall be with child, and ſhall bring forth a ſon, and they ſhall call his*

his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. He was born in Bethlehem: compare Micah v. 2. with Matth. ii. 6.—*Thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee ſhall come a Governor that ſhall rule my people Iſrael.* He was called out of Egypt: compare Hoſeah xi. 1. with Matth. ii. 15. *That it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken of the Lord by the prophet, Out of Egypt have I called my Son.* The general voice of the prophets was, that he ſhould be called a Nazarene, Matth. ii. 23. He came to thoſe who ſat in darkneſs: compare

compare Iſaiah ix. 1—7. with Matth. iv. 15, 16. *The people who ſat in darkneſs ſaw a great light, and to them who ſat in the region and ſhadow of death, light is ſprung up.* He healed the ſick, and preached the goſpel to the poor: compare Iſaiah lxi. 1. with Luke iv. 18. *The ſpirit of the Lord is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the goſpel to the poor; he hath ſent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of ſight to the blind, to ſet at liberty them that are bruiſed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* See alſo chap. vii. 20—23. He came to Jeruſalem as the King who came in the name of

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the Lord: compare Iſaiah lxii. 10, 11. Zechariah ix. 9. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: ſhout, O daughter of Jeruſalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee. He is just and having ſalvation, lowly, riding upon an aſs, even a colt the foal of an aſs;* with Matth. xxi. 1—9. Mark xi. 1—10. Luke xix. 29—38. and John xii. 12—16. He was betrayed by one of his friends: compare Pſal. xli. 9. *Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me;* with Matth. xxvi. 21, 25, 47—50. Mark xiv. 18—21, 43—45. Luke xxii. 21, 22, 47, 48. John xiii. 18, 21, 26. ch. xviii. 2, 3. He

was

was ſold for thirty pieces of ſilver: compare Zech. xi. 13. with Matt. xxvi. 15. ch. xxvii. 3—10. *And they took the thirty pieces of ſilver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Iſrael did value, and gave them for the potters field, as the Lord appointed me.*

Falſe witneſſes roſe up to condemn him: compare Pſalm xxvii. 12. and xxxv. 11. *Falſe witneſſes did riſe up, they laid to my charge things that I knew not, they rewarded me evil for good;* with Matth. xxvi. 59—61. Mark xiv. 55—58.

He was ſilent when falſely accuſed: compare Iſaiah liii. 7. *He was oppreſſed and*

and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth; with Matth. xxvi. 63. and xxvii. 12—14. Mark xiv. 61. and xv. 3—5.

He was delivered to Pilate a Gentile governor, and by him ſent to Herod: compare Pſal. ii. 1, 2. *Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth ſet themſelves and the rulers of the earth take counſel together againſt the Lord, and againſt his Anointed;* with Matth. xxvii. 2. Mark xv. 1. Luke xxiii. 1, 7. Acts iv. 25—28.

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He was crucified, his hands and feet pierced: compare Pſal. xxii. 16. *The aſſembly of the wicked have incloſed me, they pierced my hands and my feet.* Zech. xii. 10.—*They ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced;* with Matt. xxvii. 35. Luke xxiv. 40. John xix. 37. and xx. 25—27.

The ſoldiers parted his garments, and caſt lots for his veſture: compare Pſal. xxii. 18. *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my veſture;* with John xix. 23, 24.

His legs were not broken: compare Pſal. xxxiv. 20. *He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken;* with John xix. 33—36. but, His ſide was pierc-

ed with a ſpear: compare Zech. xii. 10. with John xix. 34.

He was buried: compare Iſai. liii. 9. with John xix. 41, 42. and Jonah i. 17. with Matth. xii. 40. He was raiſed from the dead without ſeeing corruption: compare Pſal. xvi. 10. *Thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell, neither wilt thou ſuffer thine holy One to ſee corruption;* with Acts ii. 31. He aſcended on high: compare Pſal. xvi. 11. Pſal. lxviii. 18. *Thou haſt aſcended on high, thou haſt led captivity captive;* with Mark xvi. 19. Luke xxiv. 51. Acts i. 9. Eph. iv. 8. Acts ii. 31, 32. and ch. v. 30, 31.

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Theſe are a part of that wonderful aſſemblage of predictions, which have found their fulfilment in Jeſus Chriſt, and which, while they carry conviction of his being the Meſſiah, fill the mind with aſtoniſhment: and ſuch appears to have been the kind of evidence with which the apoſtles teſtified that Jeſus was the Chriſt.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

WITH regard to the apoſtles, the preachers of Jeſus Chriſt: they were either themſelves deceived by an impoſtor, and became dupes to his deſigns; or they were themſelves impoſtors, and meant to make mankind ſubſervient to their deſigns; or they were ſo thoroughly convinced of the truth of the doctrines which they preached, and ſo ſtrongly impreſſed with a conviction of the importance of

of theſe truths, that they were willing to ſuffer the loſs of all things, and even of life itſelf, rather than fail in communicating this knowledge, ſo important to all mankind.

All the impoſtors whoſe hiſtory has reached us, have been perſons whoſe real views and deſigns were very different from what they avowed as their intentions, and their cunning ſuperior to that of thoſe whom they made ſubſervient to their purpoſes.

The acquiſition of power, riches, or fame, or all three, have been their ultimate objects; and their deceptions have been practiſed for obtaining theſe ends. It was neceſſary that they ſhould

hold

hold out to their followers ſomething particularly alluring, to be enjoyed excluſively by them, thereby to induce them to aſſiſt in the proſecution of their ſchemes, with that enthuſiaſtic energy which is moſt likely to enſure ſucceſs.

The character of Jeſus Chriſt was ſo very different from all this, that even the deiſts themſelves have not commonly imputed impoſture to him.

He always declared his deſigns to be the happineſs, not of any particular nation, but of all mankind; and that he was to accompliſh this end by leading them to the knowledge of the true God, and the practice of moral holineſs:

neſs: and accordingly he embraced every opportunity of communicating the moſt important inſtruction.

He profeſſed that God was his Father, and that all the wiſdom, and all the power which he poſſeſſed, were derived from him; and he ſhewed his filial obedience by an invariable obſervance of the will of his Father and his God.

He declared that he was ſent of God, not to do his own will, but to ſpeak the words and do the works of his Father, and accordingly he ſhewed forth the power of God in the miracles which he performed and the doctrines he taught. He healed the ſick,

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made the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the blind to ſee. He caſt out devils, raiſed the dead, and preached the goſpel to the poor.—*He went about doing good.*—While he himſelf went about teaching and doing good, he reproved with authority and freedom, what was evil in the doctrines and practice of thoſe who perverted the law of God; and thereby exaſperated the rulers of the Jews to ſuch a degree, that they perſecuted him till they at laſt accompliſhed his murder: but he, with a perfect underſtanding of their enmity, and a clear perception of its iſſue, was not deterred from doing the will of his heavenly Father: he ſhrunk not

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from obloquy, reproach, perſecution, and a cruel death, ſeeking not honour from men, but ſolicitous only to do them good, and to glorify his Father and his God.

Whilſt in his own conduct he exhibited a character of ſpotleſs purity and patient ſubmiſſion, he did not flatter his diſciples with promiſes of exemption from evil, or of excluſive enjoyments; but carefully inſtructed them, that the happineſs which he promiſed was deſigned for all mankind, as well as for them; and they underſtood it ſo: that he deſigned to make them ſervants, to proclaim his goſpel to the world: and that in the courſe of this

 ſervice,

ſervice, they would be expoſed to all manner of injuries, perſecutions, the hatred of all nations, and death itſelf, without any earthly privileges.

From this ſlight view of the ſubject, it evidently appears, that Jeſus was not and could not poſſibly be an impoſtor; and therefore his diſciples were not deceived, but fairly and honeſtly inſtructed in what they were to expect; and they found the predictions verified.

There was as little chance that they themſelves ſhould be impoſtors. The nature of their doctrine, which was peace and good-will to men, was oppoſite to impoſture of any kind. They were men capable of underſtanding the inſtruc-

inſtructions which they had received: they had ſeen their maſter uniform in his conduct and teſtimony: they had ſeen him confirm it by his blood: and he whoſe name was caſt out as the execration of the rulers and people of his own nation, was not by any means adapted to become the hero of an impoſture, and that too in the very city where he was known and crucified. They profeſſed to be ſent by the power of God, to teſtify his reſurrection from the dead to the very people who had murdered him, and to preach ſalvation through his name as the only Saviour; and this teſtimony was confirmed by ſuch ſtriking and inconteſti-

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ble miracles, that even their enemies were conſtrained to acknowledge their reality and force. They taught the ſame doctrines, and inculcated the ſame practice which their Maſter had taught and exemplified in their preſence: and like him, they arrogated nothing of diſcovery or of power to themſelves, but uniformly teſtified that they had no claim to merit of any kind, and that the doctrines which they taught, the miracles which they performed, were not their own, but exhibitions of the power, wiſdom, and love of God, manifeſted through Jeſus Chriſt, the one mediator between God and men. At the ſame time, their intrepidity in teſtifying

fying the ſublime truths they were charged to preach, in the face of all oppoſition; their patient enduring every injury to which they were ſubjected, and even ſealing their teſtimony with their lives, ſhewed that they counted nothing too great to do or to ſuffer for Chriſt's ſake. They counted nothing dear or precious to them, but what contributed to promulgate and enforce the precious and important truths, which they had in charge to communicate to mankind. The only concern which they had about themſelves was, that they might fulfil the miniſtry which they had received of the Lord, and that they might confirm and cor-

corroborate it by holy and unblamable lives, animated by their conviction of the truth, and by thoſe precious hopes, which they conſidered themſelves as poſſeſſing in common with all who received and kept their teſtimony.

Thus it appears, that the character and conduct of the apoſtles of Jeſus Chriſt, were in every reſpect the very reverſe of impoſture. That having renounced the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, they commend themſelves to the conſcience of every honeſt man, as honeſt witneſſes of the truth which they themſelves believed.

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The apoſtles of Jeſus Chriſt, fully inſtructed by their maſter, directed by the ſpirit of God, and endued with the capacity of ſpeaking in various languages, and the power of working miracles in atteſtation of their divine miſſion, were properly qualified to preach the goſpel to all mankind: and accordingly they began at Jeruſalem on the day of pentecoſt, about ſeven weeks after the reſurrection of Jeſus, at a time when there was a great aſſembly of people from various nations preſent, who were aſtoniſhed to hear the wonderful works of God declared in the languages of all the nations from which they had come, and this by a few men

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who were known to be illiterate Galileans: and when inquiry was made, *What meaneth this?* and others ſcoffing ſaid they were drunken, Peter ſtanding up with the eleven, ſhewed the people that this was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel; and what they now ſaw and heard, was the reſult and proof of Jeſus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, being raiſed up and ſeated at the right hand of God, as the Saviour of mankind; and exhorted them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of their ſins. This was the firſt public teſtimony of the apoſtles, and the effect was the converſion of about three thou-

thouſand in one day. The ſubſequent miracles by which the divinity of their miſſion was authenticated, were of ſuch a nature, and exhibited in ſuch public and unequivocal inſtances, in the preſence of their enemies, as evidently ſhewed that deception or colluſion were impoſſible; inſomuch that the rulers of the Jews who had murdered Jeſus Chriſt, finding his reſurrection and ſubſequent power and glory, witneſſed by ſuch inconteſtible evidence, knew not what ſteps to take for the ſuppreſſion of his doctrine. We find them expreſſing themſelves thus: Acts iv. 16. *What ſhall we do to theſe men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them,*

is manifest to all them who dwell at Jeruſalem, and we cannot deny it.

It will readily occur to our reflection, that miracles never were intended for the proof of any moral propoſition or doctrine, but for the confirmation of the facts which the apoſtles teſtified, viz. the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, and the dignity and power with which he was inveſted, and the authority whereby they called all men every where to repent, and proclaimed forgiveneſs of ſin, and ſalvation to all who believed and obeyed the goſpel.

That the books of the ſacred ſcripture were written by the men whoſe names they bear, has been admitted in all

all ages, with at leaſt as much evidence as that the works of any of the ancients were written by the authors to whom they are aſcribed. Indeed with much ſtronger evidence, as has abundantly appeared by the acknowledgment of the learned for above three thouſand years paſt.—The Old Teſtament has been, and ſtill is known and maintained to be the writings of thoſe whoſe names the different books bear, by the whole nation of the Jews, who ſurely muſt have known the works of their own writers better than any other people; and thoſe who would reject their teſtimony in this reſpect, ought at leaſt to ſubſtitute ſomething better authenticated

ticated in its place: and till this is done (which has not yet been attempted) their teſtimony muſt ſtand good.

With regard to the New Teſtament, its credibility and authenticity have been amply ſhewn by various able writers; ſuch, for inſtance, as Lardner's Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory; and a ſhorter view of it in Paley's Evidences of Chriſtianity.

Beſides the ſketches already given, there is another ſource of evidence, called the internal evidence of Chriſtianity, that is, the evidence which ariſes from the ſublimity of the diſcoveries, and the originality and purity of the morality contained in the ſacred writ-

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ings, and which are unattainable without revelation: but this will be better underſtood from a view of the peculiar doctrines and principles themſelves.

LETTER

LETTER V.

ON looking into the Bible, the very firſt thing that ſtrikes our attention, is a diſcovery of the being and attributes of God. Gen. i. 1. *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* This meets us on the threſhold of our inquiry, and claims our firſt attention.

As we have already ſeen that human reaſon and philoſophy, unaſſiſted by revelation, are incapable of diſcover-

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ing the character, or even the exiſtence of a Deity, let us inquire what account the ſcripture has given of his character, his deſigns, his conduct, and the reaſons of it.

He is repreſented as infinite in power: indeed the creation of the heavens and the earth evidently intimate this. *He ſpake and it was done, he commanded and it ſtood faſt.* Pſ. xxxiii. 6—9. He claims this character to himſelf, Gen. xvii. 1. *I am the Almighty God.* Exod. vi. 3. *I appeared unto Abraham, unto Iſaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty.* It is not neceſſary to multiply inſtances of the aſcription of infinite power to him: they occur through

through the whole of the ſcripture, and his works confirm it beyond any room for doubt.

His wiſdom is infinite. Prov. iii. 19. *The Lord by wiſdom hath founded the earth, by understanding hath he eſtabliſhed the heavens.* Job xxviii. 20, 23. *Whence then cometh wiſdom, and where is the place of understanding? God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.* His wiſdom is manifeſted in all his works. *It is high as heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the ſea.* Job xi. 8, 9. His knowledge and underſtanding are repreſented as directing and ſuperintending the exertions

tions of his power in all circumſtances, and in every place at the ſame time, through every the moſt minute part of his creation, ſo that not a hair can fall to the ground without his cognizance. Hence he is repreſented as preſent every where, ſuperintending or controlling every thing or event. The thoughts of the heart are naked and open before him; perfectly underſtanding all our thoughts, words and actions, and all their conſequences, even the moſt remote, and prepared to direct, reſtrain, or check them, that they cannot ultimately defeat or impair the accompliſhment of his own purpoſes.

It is impoſſible that any ſecret can elude his omniſcience, or that to his preſcience any thing can be contingent. Paſt, preſent, and future, are perfectly under his immediate inſpection, with a perſpicuity and accuracy abſolutely inconceivable to the moſt exalted created intelligence. His operations and ſuperintendence, extend from the moſt minute atom or its qualities to the utmoſt poſſible extenſion of the univerſe; while his immutable exiſtence and eternity of duration, preclude the ſmalleſt poſſibility of error in his government and conduct.

The intereſting point of view in which we are taught to conſider the Supreme

Supreme Being, is that relative manifeſtation of his character, deſigns, and conduct, which more immediately reſpects mankind: and hence, in what has been called his *moral* character or attributes, we are led more particularly to obſerve this relation to our ſtate and proſpects, which naturally ſuggeſts the *ſtate of man* as a ſubject of conſideration, which may be briefly ſtated in this place, and further diſcuſſed in the courſe of our inquiries.

Revelation directs our views to the creation of man in a ſtate of happineſs, ſubject to a law with a capacity of obeying it, and probably, of improvement in felicity. He was commanded to keep this

this law, and threatened with death as the conſequence of diſobedience. He diſobeyed and became ſubject to death; and all his poſterity have been and are ſubject to death, as well as himſelf. The moral ſtate of mankind appears greatly deranged; wickedneſs is diffuſed over the world; and men, ſo far from ſeeking to be reconciled to God, became more and more eſtranged from him, ſo that at length the knowledge of the true God became obſcured among them through their wickedneſs: but ſtill the conſciouſneſs of deficiency which they retained from the traditions of revelation, however obſcured, led them to multiply falſe gods to themſelves,

ſelves, vainly ſeeking from them relief from their conſciouſneſs of guilt. Enemies to God, and to one another, their diſobedience to him became the ſource of miſery to themſelves; and with ſome faint ideas of a future ſtate of retribution, derived from the traditions of revelation, they were deſtitute of certainty, well grounded hope, or rational conſolation. With talents capable of promoting the happineſs of ſociety, they oppreſſed one another by domeſtic diſcords and foreign wars; and the peace and comfort of families were deſtroyed by the cunning or the paſſions of individuals: ſo that inſtead of genuine amelioration of their moral

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ſtate, their hopes were deceived by falſe proſpects; and deception only ſmoothed the ſurface of things, whilſt numberleſs evils rankled under the deluſive appearance of improvement.

Such a diſmal ſituation ſtood in need of the cheering rays of revelation, to diſpel the gloom, and by exhibiting natural evils in the light of moral diſcipline, to make them ſubſervient to the beſt and moſt important intereſts of man. Hence ſuch a diſplay of the Divine character and conduct, as was adapted to the condition and neceſſities of mankind, muſt be peculiarly important and intereſting: and accordingly we find in the Divine record, that good-

goodneſs is a leading feature in the Divine character.

The Lord is good to all: his tender mercies are over all his works. He maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt.

As goodneſs forms a leading feature in the Divine character, a little attention will lead us to obſerve the modifications of his goodneſs in every part of his conduct; and all his attributes are in the moſt perfect harmony with it, and contribute to promote the accompliſhment of the plans of infinite wiſdom and infinite goodneſs, with infinite power. Conſiſtently with this, the

the apoſtle ſays, Eph. i. 9, 10. *Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleaſure which he hath purpoſed in himſelf, that in the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of times he might gather together in one* (or reunite under one head) *all things in Christ, both which are in the heavens and which are on earth, even in him.* That *he will have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* 1 Tim. ii. 4. therefore the goſpel is preached unto all men, and unto the principalities and powers, for their recovery, according to the eternal purpoſe which he purpoſed in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord. Eph. iii. 9—11.

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In the character which he assumes to himself, as before remarked, Mercy is the very first attribute which meets our view: *The Lord God, merciful and gracious.* Exod. xxxiv. The condition of man, as having transgressed the law of his God, admitted of no hope but from the mercy of God. In many cases, if a man has injured his neighbour he may have wherewith to make him adequate compensation, and thus repair the damage which he had occasioned; but when man trangresses the law of God, what equivalent can he render to him? All that which he possesses is the property and the gift of his maker; he can have nothing indepen-

dent of him to make compenſation for his miſconduct. Wherewith, then, ſhall he come before the Lord? The anſwer is, *Let the wicked forſake his wickedneſs, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord who will have* MERCY *upon him, for our God will abundantly* PARDON. Hence the *Knowledge of ſalvation is by the remiſſion of ſins, through the tender mercy of our God.* Luke i. 77, 78. And indeed, through the whole of the ſcriptures, the mercy of God is exhibited as the foundation of man's confidence towards God.

The mercy of God, therefore, his forgiving ſin, and freeing the repent-

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ing ſinner from the imputation of guilt, is celebrated in the Old and New Teſtaments as univerſal, and as enduring for ever: *ſhewing mercy unto thouſands* (of generations) *of them that love him and keep his commandments.* Exod. xx. 6.—*His mercy is from generation to generation unto them that fear him.* Luke i. 50. *He is merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abounding in goodneſs and truth.* Exod. xxxiv.

Holineſs is one of the attributes of God, and inſeparable from his character and conduct. Holineſs ſeems to be that perfect purity and freedom from any immoral ſtain, which is totally incompatible with any poſſible error or

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turpitude. There is nothing in the Divine character or conduct that can have the ſmalleſt affinity to moral evil on his part, as its author or perpetrator; nor is it poſſible that moral evil can be in any way pleaſing or acceptable to him. *He is of purer eyes than to look on iniquity. The throne of iniquity cannot have fellowſhip with him.*

Conſiſtently with this holineſs, his mercy is always exerciſed. The wicked muſt forſake his wickedneſs before he can be pardoned: men muſt be turned from darkneſs to light, from the power of Satan unto God, before they can receive forgiveneſs of ſins.—It is part of his character—*Clearing he will not*

clear

clear the guilty—consequently it is impossible that any man can receive pardon from God, or come with acceptance before him, so long as he continues an unrepenting sinner, for, *Without holiness no one can see God.*

This also is a part of his goodness, for if men could even receive forgiveness whilst they continued in the career of wickedness, not only no moral advantage would be derived from it, but men would be encouraged to continue and even increase in wickedness without restraint, and both society would be more injured, and the individual would be incapable of reaping any benefit from such pardon, and therefore its end

would

would be defeated.—Hence he is repreſented as long-ſuffering, and waiting that he may be gracious; that is, he has long patience with men, till the diſcipline and means which he employs, have the effect of humbling and making them ſenſible of their wickedneſs, and making them earneſtly ſeek forgiveneſs, that their hearts being turned to him, like the ſoftened wax, they may receive deep and indelible impreſſions of his gracious kindneſs; and thus a moral amelioration is effected in them.

God is repreſented in the Scripture as inflexibly juſt, invariably connecting vice with miſery as its neceſſary conſequence and puniſhment, and continuing

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and varying the chaſtiſements with unremitting attention, in order to produce the reformation of the vicious. If we attentively read the 26th chapter of Leviticus, we will find an example of the ſeverity of God, and the purpoſe for which it is inflicted, and ſee that all the puniſhment which he inflicts is intended for the benefit of the ſufferers. *He chastens for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holineſs.* Heb. xii. And from his immutability the concluſion is obvious, that in every inſtance, and in all his diſpenſations, this end is invariably purſued; for he is unchangeable, not in his modes of operation, which are always adapted to circum-

circumſtances; but in the principles upon which he conducts his operations, and the end to be obtained.—But the juſtice and faithfulneſs of God conſiſts not only in inflicting puniſhment on the diſobedient: they are equally manifeſted in the fulfilment of his promiſes as in the accompliſhment of his threatenings. He has connected the promiſes of bleſſings with obedience, and never fails to fulfil theſe promiſes with the ſame invariable juſtice and faithfulneſs, with a view to confirm his ſervants in their love and attachment to himſelf, by their experience of his fatherly kindneſs.

His

His juſtice, therefore, in all its modifications, in every inſtance, in all his diſpenſations, whether in the preſent or in a future ſtate, is conducted upon the ſame principle of *goodneſs*, directed by unerring wiſdom to the attainment of its benevolent end.

N LETTER

LETTER VI.

AS the purpoſes of God have in view the happineſs of his creatures; as he deſigned that all men ſhould be benefited by the diſpenſations of his *Goodneſs;* be brought to know, to love, and to obey him, as eſſentially neceſſary to the higheſt felicity of which their natures are capable; ſo he has adapted his meaſures for the accompliſhment of this benevolent end, with infinite wiſdom and goodneſs.

He

He early announced to mankind that he would ſend a Deliverer, intimating that from the woman ſhould proceed one who ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head, and that in the conflict the ſerpent ſhould bruiſe his heel. The inſtitution of ſacrifice was at a very early period, and the whole of the ancient ritual was emblematical of the way of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt.

The character of Jeſus Chriſt the Saviour, is a very important ſubject of conſideration; as the right apprehenſion of this is connected with the knowledge of the only true God, and leads to a ſatisfactory underſtanding of the Divine economy.

He

He is repreſented as, *The firſt born of every creature.* Col. i. 15. *The beginning of the creation of God.* Rev. iii. 14. That, *He is before all things, and by him all things were created.* Col. i. 16, 17. *God created all things by Jeſus Chriſt.* Eph. iii. 9. *All things were made by him, and without him not any thing was made.* John i. 3. Compare Prov. viii. 22—30. as being *Rich.* 2 Cor. viii. 9. *In the form of God.* Phil. ii. 6. *And poſſeſſing glory with the only true God before the world was.* John xvii. 5.

From theſe and ſimilar teſtimonies it appears, that he was in a peculiar ſenſe the only begotten of the Father, the firſt being whom God brought into exiſt-

exiſtence (at what time is impoſſible to be known) and the Agent by whom he created all things; and he is recogniſed by his Father in that character. Pſal. cii. 25. quoted by the apoſtle, Heb. i. 10. *Thou, Lord, in the beginning haſt laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands.*

He is likewiſe repreſented as *Upholding all things by the word of his power.* Heb. i. 3. *By him all things conſiſt.* Col. i. 17. Conſiſtent with this view he ſeems to have manifeſted himſelf to Adam, Gen. iii. 9. to Noah, chap. vi. 7, 8, 9. to Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, Gen. xii. 1, 3. and xvii. 1. and chap. xviii. ch. xxvi. 1, 5. ch. xxxii.

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24, 30. ch. xxxv. 9. to Moſes, Exod. chap. iii. iv. &c. &c. &c. to Joſhua, Joſh. i. 1, &c. &c. &c. to Gideon, Judges vi. 11, &c. chap. vii. 2, &c. to Samuel, and to the prophets in a great variety of inſtances. Hence we may conclude, that all things were under his direction and management, previous to his coming in the form of a ſervant. From theſe teſtimonies, which are ſo very explicit, it would appear, that thoſe who deny the exiſtence of Jeſus Chriſt previous to his coming into the world in the reign of Auguſtus, are miſtaken, as they are thereby reduced to the neceſſity, either of rejecting conſiderable portions of the ſcripture,

ture, or of interpreting them in ſome way very different from what appears to be their moſt obvious and natural ſignification: and while the ſyſtem is preſſed with this difficulty which there ſeems no way of avoiding, it does not contribute to give us more conſiſtent apprehenſions of the character and conduct of God, or of the ſtate and proſpects of man.

The glorious dignity which Jeſus Chriſt enjoyed before he took upon him the form of a ſervant, ſhews us the ſtrength of his filial obedience, and his condeſcenſion and love to man, when he who *was* RICH *for our ſakes became* POOR, *that we through his poverty might become*

become rich, and ſhews us the greatneſs of the ſacrifice which he made, when *He emptied himſelf and made himſelf of no reputation, and became obedient even unto death*, that he might ſave us from deſtruction.

He came as the prophet had foretold, as a root out of a dry ground, having no external dignity to make him an object of attention or deſire. His whole deportment was modeſt, unaſſuming, the pattern of humility and the greateſt philanthropy; and though clothed with Divine power and authority, as the prophet had declared. Iſaiah xi. 1, 5. the ſpirit of the Lord reſted on him, the ſpirit of wiſdom and under-

underſtanding, the ſpirit of counſel and might, the ſpirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord; yet he aſſumed no dignity to himſelf, but uniformly declared himſelf to be the Son and Servant of his God and Father, and that all the power belonged to his Father. And in the proſecution of the work which God had given him to do, he ſubmitted to poverty, contempt, ſuffering, and death, with perfect reſignation to the will of his Father. He went about teaching and doing good. All his doctrines, his conduct, his miracles, ſhewed the moſt perfect love to God, and the moſt unconquerable benevolence to men.

Hence we are led to contemplate the character of Jeſus Chriſt, not merely as the inſtrument by whom the love of God was manifeſted to man, but alſo as an active voluntary agent in the great work, who loved mankind himſelf, and with a perfect underſtanding of all the evils and ſufferings to which ſuch condeſcenſion would ſubject him, willingly offered himſelf for the purpoſe of reconciling ſinners unto God. Compare Pſalm xl. 6, 7, 8, with Heb. x. 5. *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not deſire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and ſin offering thou hast not required. Then ſaid I, Lo I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me:*

I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart. Therefore the Apoſtle, 2 Cor. v. 14. ſays, *The love of Christ constraineth us to live no more to ourſelves, but to him who died for us and roſe again:* and he is celebrated, Rev. i. 5. by the character of *Him who loved us:* and Epheſ. v. 25. *Christ loved the Church and gave himſelf for it.* Many other inſtances occur in the New Teſtament.

He is repreſented as a Prieſt, made ſuch by an oath, Pſal. cx. 4. *The Lord hath ſworn and will not repent, thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedeck.* Comp. Heb. v. 6, 10. and vii. 17, 24. *He offered up himſelf*, verſe 27,

27, and, *Becauſe he continueth ever, he hath an unchangeable Prieſthood*, verſe 24. Therefore he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt, them that come to God by him: *Seeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them*, verſe 25. that if any of his ſervants treſpaſs they may be reclaimed by his power and grace, and obtain mercy and forgiveneſs of God through his interceſſion. 1 John ii. 1.—*If any man ſin we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Christ the righteous. Who appears in the preſence of God for us.* Heb. ix. 24. to purify the repenting ſinner from his tranſgreſſions; *to purge the conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God.* Heb. ix. 14.

14. agreeably to the declaration of the angel, Matt. i. 21. *He ſhall ſave his people from their ſins.*

Being raiſed from the dead, agreeable to his hope, Pſal. xvi. 10. Acts ii. 30, 31, 32, 33. he is inveſted with all power in heaven and in earth, according to his prayer, John xvii. 5. comp. Mat. xxviii. 18. and ſet on the right hand of the Majeſty on high, as was declared, Pſal. cx. 1. compare with Acts ii. 34, 35, 36. to reign until all his enemies ſhall become ſubject to him.

In this view we are taught to conſider him as the agent by whom the Father exerciſes his ſupreme authority; directing, controlling, or checking the conduct

conduct of individuals, ſocieties, or nations and empires, and often making them productive of events very different from what the actors contemplated; and ſo overruling the phyſical evils which men and nations are ſuffered to inflict upon one another, as to make them ſubſervient to the purpoſes of his moral government.

Jeſus Chriſt is repreſented as the one Mediator between God and man. 1 Tim. ii. 5. We have no knowledge of any intercourſe between God and man, or between the Creator and his creatures, but what is conducted through the hands of a Mediator. *No man knoweth the Father, ſave the Son, and*

and he to whom the Son will reveal him. Matth. xi. 27. *I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.* John xiv. 6. alſo Heb. viii. 6. and ix. 16.

Hence he is called the Shepherd, whoſe office is to gather in the ſtrayed ſheep: and for this purpoſe, *it pleaſed the Father that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell, that having made peace by the blood of his croſs, by him to reconcile all things to himſelf.* Col. i. 19, 20. With this view alſo the apoſtles were ſent with the miniſtry of reconciliation, teſtifying, *that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himſelf.* 2 Cor. v. 19. and through him or in his name,

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ſalvation by the remiſſion of ſin, is declared to all thoſe who repent and obey the goſpel.

Poſſeſſed of all power in heaven and earth, and the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge dwelling in him, he is fitly qualified to exerciſe the office of Mediator of the New Teſtament, which, by means of his death, has a retroſpective view, and includes thoſe who had lived before his coming, as well as thoſe who were to come after him: for the former had all lived under his control as well as the latter, whether they were his voluntary ſubjects or his enemies; and by his miniſtrations all are

are to be reconciled and willingly ſubmit to government.

His God and Father hath promiſed, and confirmed it by an oath, that every knee ſhall bow in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, and every tongue ſhall confeſs that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Every thing is to be ſubjected unto him, excepting only the Father who ſubjects them under him. And as he reigns with a perfect knowledge of all men, a perfect comprehenſion of every thought, word and action, he is fitly qualified to be the univerſal judge; for, *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men ſhould ho-*

nour the Son even as they honour the Father. John v. 22, 23.

Thoſe who by a patient continuance in well doing have approved themſelves his faithful ſervants, who have loved God, and made his law the rule of their conduct, will enter into the enjoyment of felicity; but thoſe who were contentious and would not obey the truth, will be placed under a more ſevere courſe of diſcipline, and effectually learn, that chaſtiſement is the native conſequence of their perſeverance in wickedneſs. Even then the infliction of ſufferings will proceed on the invariable principle of benevolence, which applies various degrees of chaſtiſement

tiſement in order to effect the purpoſe of voluntary reformation; until all without exception, becoming ſenſible of the exceeding evil of ſin, ſhall turn from it with abhorrence, and with their whole heart turn to the Lord. Then, all enmity being ſubdued, Jeſus Chriſt will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, all things being perfectly reconciled through him, according to the Divine purpoſe, that God may be all in all.

Such appears to be the general outline of the deſigns of God, to be accompliſhed by Jeſus Chriſt, and this deſign is invariably kept in view through all ages and diſpenſations: and though individuals may, for a time, deprive them-

themſelves of the happineſs which would reſult to them from believing and obeying the truth, the means which Jeſus Chriſt has in his power to apply in the courſe of his adminiſtration, will at laſt be ſucceſsful, in undeceiving them, and bringing them to a perfect conſciouſneſs of the extreme evil of their wickedneſs, and of the Divine benevolence, which has directed the whole of his conduct towards them; that humbled to the duſt, under the deepeſt ſenſe of their own unworthineſs, and acknowledging his mercy and love, they ſhall earneſtly ſolicit forgiveneſs of their ſins, and ſhall not ſolicit in vain.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

THE dignity and the depravity of human nature, are themes which have been largely deſcanted on, and doubtleſs human nature exhibits evident ſigns of both. Various conjectures and reaſonings have been attempted to account for theſe appearances, by tracing them to their ſource.

Revelation aſſures us, that God created all things by Jeſus Chriſt; and there ſeems good reaſon to conclude, that

that when his works came from his hand they muſt have been very good, and of courſe that ſuch muſt have been the ſtate of man when he came from the hands of his Creator. How he came to be as he now is, has been long a ſubject of diſpute, and not yet ſettled. It has been ſuppoſed, that every individual of mankind exiſted in a former ſtate as moral agents, enjoying happineſs, and capable, by their continued obedience to the law of their God, of continuing in felicity. That by the abuſe of their freedom they fell, though not all in equal degrees: that God was pleaſed to connect them with groſſer materials to prevent their deſtruc-

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tion, and, placing them in Adam, to render them capable ſubjects of a courſe of moral and phyſical diſcipline, for their recovery to a ſtate of moral holineſs and conſequent happineſs; a ſyſtem which he is carrying on under all the varieties of diſpenſations which his wiſdom ſees proper, to induce them to attach themſelves to obedience and holineſs, as the objects of their deliberate choice, the rational reſult of their own experience and conviction, and the only way to the higheſt felicity of which their natures are capable. This ſuppoſition does not appear to be any way inconſiſtent either with ſcripture, or what we obſerve among mankind.

When

When man was placed in Eden, it ſeems pretty obvious that he was in a ſituation which needed reſtraint, and he was put under one, and threatened with death as the conſequence of diſobedience. His Maker ſaid, it was not good for man to be alone; he needed a help, and God made an help meet for him. Theſe hints may intimate, that man was now placed in a ſituation where his propenſity to evil was reſtrained, and death might not be neceſſary; but when he diſobeyed he broke through the reſtraint, and a change in the mode of diſcipline became neceſſary: the evil propenſities formerly reſtrained were now looſe, and it became

proper

proper that he ſhould be ſubjected to death. The ſituation to which Adam had now reduced himſelf became alſo the ſtate of his poſterity: their propenſities were not under the reſtraint of his former ſtate, and it became equally proper that they ſhould be ſubjected to the ſame diſcipline under which he was now placed.

It was now that their various diſpoſitions began to appear, and they ſtill appear in ſuch diverſity of mildneſs and ferocity, of candor and duplicity, of docility and obſtinacy, of intelligence and ſtupidity, as has afforded ample room for inquiry and diſcuſſion, which ſeem as far from ſettling the point as

on. Is there any other ſuppoſitio
which offers a more rational account o
the cauſe of that ſuffering, conſidere
as a part of moral diſcipline?

But it will be ſaid, that infants ar
incapable of diſcerning the relation be
tween the cauſe and the effect, an
therefore are not proper ſubjects o
moral diſcipline.—The firſt is true, bu
it is a difficulty which preſſes at leaſt a
much on any other ſuppoſition, an
therefore does not peculiarly invalidat
what has been ſuppoſed above. As t
the latter, we cannot pronounce wit
certainty that they may not, even i
that ſtate, be ſubjects of moral diſci
pline.

It is a fact that moral education may be, and ſometimes is, conducted in part at leaſt, by way of *impreſſion* rather than *reaſoning*,* and however limited the power of man may be, it does not follow that it is not competent to the power of God, to make even the delirium of a fever, or continued inſanity, ſubſervient to moral amelioration. Indeed a caſe much in point occurs in the book of Daniel; it is the caſe of Nebuchadnezzar. When his heart was lifted up with pride, he was depoſed, and deprived of his reaſon, in order to make him know and acknowledge that the Moſt

* See Dr. Ruſh's ingenious Eſſay on the Influence of Phyſical Cauſes on the Moral Faculty.

Moſt High God ruled. See Daniel iv. 24. to the end, and chap. v. 18—21. In this inſtance, it appears to have been the method which Divine wiſdom ſaw meet to employ, for the very purpoſe of moral amelioration, and it anſwered the purpoſe for which it was uſed.

In this caſe however it may be ſaid, that Nebuchadnezzar had his reaſon before, and when it was reſtored to him, he recollected and knew the cauſe and deſign of his abaſement. True, and if it can be ſhewn that the preſent ſtate of exiſtence is the only ſtate of moral diſcipline, and that God cannot or will not reſtore to mankind, or even to thoſe who die in infancy, a perfect re-

recollection and conſciouſneſs of all that they have been, done, or ſuffered, this caſe muſt be given up; but that cannot be ſhewn, the contrary is evident from ſcripture. See among many other places, Matt. xxv. 34. to the end: ſo that this muſt be admitted to be a caſe very much in point.

Indeed the idea has no novelty; it appears to have been general among the Jews in the days of Jeſus Chriſt, and was referred to in a queſtion which his own diſciples put to himſelf; and he did not intimate to them that the notion was a wrong one, and he never failed to correct their ſentiments when they were wrong. It occurs in John

ix.

ix. 1, 2, 3. The queſtion, *Who did ſin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?* and the anſwer of Jeſus, *Neither hath this man ſinned nor his parents*, appears to intimate, not that either of them were ſinleſs, but that his being born blind was not the fruit of any particular ſin.

Upon the whole then, this ſuppoſition does not appear to be any way inconſiſtent with reaſon or ſcripture, and may be ſafely admitted, if it can be of uſe to ſolve any of the phenomena of man.

Whatever we may ſuppoſe to have been the previous ſtate of man, revelation informs us that God formed him

of

of the duſt of the ground, and breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living ſoul. His Maker taught him language, and made him acquainted with thoſe things with which he was ſurrounded; ſo that he gave appoſite names to all the beaſts of the field, and the fowls of the air: and thoſe who contend that Hebrew was the language of Adam, ſay that theſe names are, in that language, deſcriptive of the moſt diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics of the reſpective birds and beaſts; which indicates that he was not only taught language, but alſo its proper application.

His having dominion over the whole animated creation, whether on the land

or in the waters, implies that he must not only have understood their natures, but also the treatment which was proper for them; and his being placed in the garden to dress and keep it, presupposes that he was endued with universal knowledge of the whole vegetable world, and the various soils and manures suitable for the cultivation of the various classes, genera and species, as well as a thorough knowledge of the virtues and uses of their respective productions, as food for himself and all the creatures under his dominion.

It seems probable also that the elements of the arts and sciences were likewise communicated to him by his muni-

munificent Creator. The knowledge of huſbandry and agriculture ſeem to have been coeval with Adam, the ſcience of muſic was known, the harp and the organ were employed in his days; which implies an acquaintance with mathematical and mechanical ſcience. Metallurgy was underſtood, which preſuppoſes a knowledge of chemiſtry; and ſcientific inſtruction given to the artificers in braſs and iron, which indicates an acquaintance with the arts and ſciences in the days of Adam, little thought of by philoſophers and diſcoverers in modern days, who do not advert to the dignified extent of mind beſtowed on our progenitor.

With

With reſpect to the moral ſtate of Adam, it was no leſs exalted. God made man upright, Eccl. vii. 29. He was made the capable ſubject of a law; inſtructed in the knowledge of life, the knowledge of good and evil, with their reſpective conſequences; and provided with a ſuitable and amiable companion to give occaſion for and encouragement to the practice of the ſocial virtues; to ſhare his labours and to increaſe his felicity by friendly participation and ſocial intercourſe. Poſſeſſed of the friendſhip, and honoured with the viſits of his Divine Benefactor, whom he alſo daily contemplated in his works, and whom he always pleaſed by his conduct,

duct, while he continued obedient to his law; his dignified ſtate muſt have been ſuch as we can have but very imperfect ideas of from the hints given by Moſes.

But Adam in his beſt eſtate was of the earth, earthy; he was not a ſpiritual, but a *ſouliſh* man. The ſcriptures repreſent man as conſiſting of body, ſoul, and ſpirit, as in 1 Theſſ. v. 23. and Heb. iv. 12. The ſoul may be that faculty by which we can apprehend, contemplate, and enjoy rational pleaſure, or ſuffer pain from this material ſyſtem in which we live; and the ſpirit that by which we can have intercourſe with, and enjoy happineſs from

ſpiritual

ſpiritual and Divine objects. Hence, 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. the natural, or *ſoulish*, man receiveth not the things of the ſpirit of God—becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned; and therefore thoſe whoſe higheſt wiſdom (James iii. 15.) is earthly or *ſouliſh*, cannot know them, and hence too the natural or *ſouliſh* body, 1 Cor. xv. 44. ſeems to be a body adapted to the material ſyſtem in which we now live, and the ſpiritual body adapted to the ſpiritual ſtate in which the righteous will be placed after the reſurrection. Therefore the firſt Adam was made a living ſoul; the laſt Adam a quickening ſpirit.

Adam

Adam being a *ſouliſh* man, of the earth, earthy, verſe 47. was only capable of ſouliſh attainments and enjoyments. The ſpirit, which in Prov. xx. 27. is ſtyled the candle of the Lord, was in him probably as a lamp not lighted; and it is likely he could not be capable of ſpiritual ideas in the ſtate in which he then was, at leaſt not in that early ſtage of it which only was accompliſhed before he fell. His fall, which is briefly ſtated by Moſes, made death a neceſſary conſequence to himſelf and his poſterity; and from the concurrent teſtimony of ſcripture, it becomes a beneficial conſequence to man, for mankind are now, as Adam

was,

was, *ſouliſh*, and can never be completely freed from that ſtate but by death: till then they muſt in ſome degree bear the image of the firſt Adam, inſomuch that the Apoſtle, 1 Cor. xv. 44. ſays, that at death the body is ſown a natural or ſouliſh body. Now Jeſus Chriſt is the quickening ſpirit, whoſe word and ſpirit quickens the ſpirits of the children of men, that they may bear his image, (verſe 49.) and the change which this quickening produces, is ſpoken of as regeneration, 1 Pet. i. 13. New Birth, John iii. 3. 1 Pet. i. 23. Eph. ii. 1, 5. and many other figures, where the change is ſpoken of as begun but not completed;

and

and death appears an important ſtep in the Divine economy, for completely diſſolving the connection with the firſt Adam, that the image of the ſecond may be perfected.

In the ſame point of view may all the diſtreſſes and afflictions of mankind, with propriety be conſidered as valuable and important parts of moral diſcipline, made neceſſary by ſin, and applied by infinite wiſdom and benevolence for the purpoſe of producing moral good. We may form ſome idea of the propriety of this, by conſidering the importance of medicines to a diſeaſed body; or ſurgical operations, ſuch as the drawing of a tooth, or the am-

putation of a limb, which though extremely painful, are performed with a benevolent intention, and often with a beneficial effect. There is this difference however, that though men often fail in accompliſhing their deſigns; it is impoſſible that the purpoſes of God can be ultimately fruſtrated.

It has often happened, that from a miſtaken view of the phyſical evils to which individuals and ſocieties are ſubject, arguments have been ſtarted againſt the government of God, and objections brought againſt the ſcriptures; whereas a proper view of the ſubject is a vindication of the Divine government, and an irrefragable proof of the Divine origin

gin of the ſcriptures, where alone can be found a rational explanation of obvious facts, which without revelation muſt have forever remained inſcrutable.

When we conſider this ſubject it will be a very obvious and juſt reflection, that all mankind are ſinners, for all without exception are under this diſcipline: and from the ſcope of the whole ſcriptures, it would ſeem to be the deſign of God to recover all mankind to holineſs and conſequent happineſs. This appears to be the uniform object of all the Divine diſpenſations in every age and ſtate, and will continue to be the object of all the diſpenſations of God towards man in every future ſtate,

till

till the whole ſhall be ſaved, and not one loſt.

If we miſs this idea, it is owing to our taking partial views of the ſcriptures and of the Divine economy, which will naturally lead to miſtaken apprehenſions of the purpoſes of God, and the deſigns of his diſpenſations. This has been a fruitful ſource of doubts and diſputations among thoſe profeſſing Chriſtianity; and many, who would not take the trouble of judging for themſelves, have turned with diſguſt from the diſcordant interpretations ſo frequently offered, and rejected the ſcriptures altogether, without inquiry, as unintelligible or contradictory.

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If we inquire into the evidence of this doctrine, it will be natural to reflect, that as infinite power, wisdom and goodness are essential to the character of God, we might rationally suppose, that when he brought intelligent beings into existence, his design was to make them good and happy; because we have no ground on which to conclude, that any design or work of the Supreme Being could possibly be inconsistent with infinite goodness. Hence we may fairly conclude, that the designs of infinite benevolence could be nothing short of the highest felicity of which his creatures were capable. The contrary supposition would picture to us a character

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the very reverſe of Him who is *good to all.*—Hence the declarations, that all the families of the earth ſhall be bleſſed in the ſeed of Abraham: that his purpoſe is to reunite all under Jeſus Chriſt, the one head; to reconcile all things by Jeſus Chriſt to himſelf: that he will have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Hence it appears, that the exiſtence of moral evil makes phyſical evils neceſſary, as a part of moral diſcipline: and the univerſal extent of the latter forms a deciſive proof of the univerſally benevolent deſigns of God, and of the unceaſing progreſs of his means for the accompliſhment of theſe deſigns.

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This view of the ſubject, while it embraces the ſcope of revelation, furniſhes a ſtrong evidence of its truth and Divine origin, by exhibiting to us a conſiſtent, a conſolatory, and glorious proſpect, unattainable from any ſource but revelation alone.

As all who admit the truth of the ſcriptures, agree that the deſign of God, in that revelation, was to recover men from ſin to holineſs, and from miſery to happineſs, it is of great importance to conſider the means which he employs to accompliſh this purpoſe; which will lead to a more particular view of the diſpenſations of God, and the preſent and future ſtate of man.

But

But as the ſubject, even a ſlight ſketch of it, is too extenſive for my preſent avocations, I muſt leave it for the preſent, and intend to reſume it when I have more leiſure.

I am, with great Sincerity,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend.

THE END.